

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 22964

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT TH US
SUBJ: KING'S COMMENTS ON THAI PROBLEMS

1. DURING MY PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS, KING HAD A 10-15
MINUTE PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH ME. KING RESPONDED TO
ALL BUT ONE OF THE POINTS WHICH I MADE IN MY CREDENTIALS
SPEECH: (SEE BANGKOK 22797)

A) KING SAID THAT SOUTHEAST ASIA HAD ENORMOUSLY CHANGED,
AND THAT THAILAND HAD ENTERED INTO A NEW, DIFFICULT BUT
VERY "EXCITING" PERIOD. THESE WERE DANGEROUS TIMES FOR
HIS COUNTRY, WHICH FACED BOTH SERIOUS EXTERNAL AND
INTERNAL PROBLEMS. THAILAND HAD TO MOVE WITH GREAT
DIPLOMATIC SKILL IN ITS VASTLY CHANGED ENVIRONMENT. THIS
NEW ENVIRONMENT, HE FELT, WOULD ADD GREATLY TO THE INTEREST
OF MY WORK.

B) KING EMPHASIZED THAT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THAILAND
HAD MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS. THE GOVERNMENT WAS
WORKING HARD TO FOSTER GROWTH, PARTICULARLY IN THE
AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. HE HIMSELF HAD TRAVELED WIDELY
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THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND COULD TESTIFY TO THE SIGNIFICANT
PROGRESS THAT HAD BEEN MADE. HE WELCOMED U.S. SUPPORT IN
THE ECONOMIC AREA. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT THE FOCUS IN
AGRICULTURE SHOULD BE ON SMALLER PROJECTS, WHERE THE
RESULTS WERE QUICKLY APPARENT, RATHER THAN ON LARGE SCALE
PROJECTS. THAILAND'S AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS WERE GREAT AND
COULD BE SOLVED ONLY GRADUALLY OVER TIME.

C) ON NARCOTICS, THE KING STRESSED HIS CONCERN BUT INDICATED THE GREAT DIFFICULTIES IN DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM. HE FELT THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE PROBLEM WERE POLITICAL AND ENFORCEMENT. HE REPEATEDLY MENTIONED THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF IT (MEANING THE PROBLEM OF BURMA). RESPONDING TO MY QUESTION ON THE SUCCESS OF CROP SUBSTITUTION EFFORTS THE KING FELT THAT SOME PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN A NUMBER OF THE VILLAGES AND THAT MORE PROGRESS COULD BE MADE. HOWEVER, MOST OF THE OPIUM FROM THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE WAS NOT GROWN IN THAILAND. THE PROBLEM WAS IN OTHER COUNTRIES, WHICH MADE IT TO A LARGE EXTENT A POLITICAL PROBLEM.

D) WHILE INDICATING HIS CONCERN FOR REFUGEES, THE KING SAID THIS WAS A MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM FOR THAILAND. THE INFUX HAD RAISED MAJOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS FOR THE THAIS. THEY WANT TO DEAL WITH THE REFUGEES IN A HUMANE MANNER, BUT THE WORLD MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT A DIFFICULT PROBLEM IT HAD BECOME FOR THAILAND. I RESPONDED THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THE GREAT CONTRIBUTION THAILAND HAS MADE TO THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM, THAT WE REALIZED IT WAS A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT PROBLEM FOR THAILAND, THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN HELPING ALLEVIATE THIS PROBLEM, AND THAT IT WAS A PROBLEM THAT THAILAND, THE UNITED STATES, AND

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OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST CONTINUE TO DEAL WITH IN A HUMANITARIAN WAY.

2. THE KING DID NOT PICK UP MY REFERENCE TO ASEAN AND IN REGARD TO AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE AREA, HE MENTIONED ONLY THE NEED FOR OUR DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT OF THAILAND. ABRAMOWITZ

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